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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 000273

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/25/2021

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SUBJECT: EUCOM DCDR DISCUSSES IRAN, CAUCASUS, BLACK SEA
WITH TGS

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: EUCOM Deputy Commander Gen Charles Wald emphasized the risk to Turkey of Iran's WMD program on January 17 in separate sessions with Turkey's CHOD and Deputy CHOD as well as at a roundtable with TGS staff chaired by DCHOD GEN Isik Kosaner. In all meetings, TGS officials acknowledged real concerns with Iran's nuclear aspirations but, as with Syria, continued to call for engagement, not isolation. During a roundtable exchange on the Black Sea, the US side emphasized that NATO should have a role there, while J-5 Chief LTG Zorlu defended Turkey's position on littoral-only participation in Black Sea operations, warned against any steps that might threaten Russia and reiterated its request for the US to persuade Bulgaria and Romania to join Operation Black Sea Harmony (OBSh). Gen Wald and DASD James MacDougall looked to Turkey for greater assistance to Georgia and support for the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations, and TGS underscored its continuing concerns in Iraq and pressed for US action against the PKK presence there. However, TGS's treatment of the PKK problem was relatively light and perfunctory. End Summary.

Iran and Missile Defense

12. (C) Gen Wald told Kosaner that stopping Iran's WMD program was an example of a common strategic interest shared by Turkey and the US. This raised questions about how best to move forward on missile defense, especially since unlike any other nuclear power, Iran has threatened the very existence of another state. A Shahab 3 could hit most of Europe, he observed. But a bigger worry than a direct missile attack by Iran was the possibility Tehran would provide radiological material to terrorists like Hizbollah. During an address at TGS headquarters to several dozen officers from J-2, J-3 and J-5, Gen Wald noted the need for a coordinated, multilateral missile defense effort that takes into account both Iran's nuclear capability and its willingness to use nuclear missiles. TGS used the subsequent roundtable discussion to underscore that an Iranian nuclear capability is a threat to both regional and global peace and security and that Turkey looks to the IAEA as the forum for resolution of the issue.

13. (C) Kosaner agreed that Turkey shared the USG's concern

about Iran's nuclear ambitions and acknowledged that the EU-3 process had failed. Nonetheless, he defined the problem as Iran's feeling isolated and insecure. Turkey believes persuasion and diplomacy would work better than pressure and the use of force. Ahmedinejad's statements were aimed at domestic audiences, but he can be persuaded, Kosaner opined. The West might increase its sports and cultural exchanges, he suggested, to reduce Iran's sense of isolation. The region could be destabilized if the international community tries to force Iran to stop. He held out hope the EU-3 negotiations might be restarted; Gen Wald thought the Russian proposal to host recycling facilities on its territory held more promise but doubted that more incentives dangled before Tehran would induce a change in behavior. The Ambassador added that diplomacy will work if the international community speaks with one voice; we need Turkey to join the chorus in sending the message that Iran's nuclear weapons program is unacceptable. Kosaner stated that Ankara was doing so.

¶4. (C) CHOD GEN Hilmi Ozkok suggested improved nonproliferation efforts were needed to cut Iran's supply of technology to develop WMD. Regarding missile defense, he saw the benefit of early warning, but expressed concern about how to defeat a missile that could be carrying either a conventional, chemical or nuclear warhead. Gen Wald noted that it was important to focus on capabilities independent of an assessment of intent. Intentions can change quickly, especially in authoritarian countries.

Caucasus

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¶5. (C) Gen Wald expressed concern about increased arms purchases by Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the hard line attitude of the Azeri Defense Minister. He described EUCOM's analysis of how renewed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan would go (the Azeri forces would be destroyed) and suggested this reinforced the need for negotiations to resolve Nagorno-Karabakh. He also suggested that Turkey and the US needed to work on the Georgians to convince them to take a more patient attitude towards Abkhazia and South Osetia. At the roundtable, the Turkish side identified Chechnya, religious extremism and Nagorno-Karabakh as the primary sources of instability in the region and emphasized the importance of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and Georgia. Turkey's efforts to share its pipeline security experience with Azerbaijan and to offer training to Georgia were also noted. Gen Wald noted that the Georgians could use help to develop their Special Operations capacity. He suggested sending a joint EUCOM/Turkey team to the region to evaluate concrete projects on which the US and Turkey might collaborate.

¶6. (C) DASD MacDougall mentioned during the roundtable that Georgia is considering a contribution to ISAF. He offered that Turkey might encourage the Georgians and even consider supporting them in Afghanistan.

¶7. (C) On Nagorno-Karabakh, Gen Wald expressed hope for positive movement in the Minsk Group process and noted his appreciation for Turkey's efforts to support the negotiations.

Black Sea

¶8. (C) Gen Wald stated that the arch encompassing the Balkans, the Black Sea, the Caspian and Central Asia was a major thoroughfare for not only energy, but trafficking in persons, drugs, WMD, etc. NATO -- and Turkey in particular -- needed to exercise leadership in this region. He welcomed Turkey's efforts in the Black Sea and stated that NATO will

have a role there in the future. TGS J-5 Chief LTG Zorlu responded that BLACKSEAFOR and Operation Black Sea Harmony (OBSH) can contain the security risks inherent to the Black Sea and are conducted in close relationship to NATO. He defended Turkey's position for littoral-only participation in Black Sea operations, asserting that Turkey has no hidden agenda there but must deal with the "sensitive realities."

¶9. (C) Zorlu laid blame with Moscow, saying that Russia is threatened by the idea of a NATO presence in the Black Sea and opposes non-littoral activity there. Given this, he said, any NATO involvement could cause a problem with Russia and create military tensions in the region. Any steps taken should be gradual. Zorlu also suggested that both Bulgaria and Romania had been more supportive of OBSH before they joined NATO, and noted his disappointment at not hearing stronger US support for Turkey's Black Sea programs. The Turkish side repeated a request first made during the Nov. 2005 High Level Defense Group (HLDG) meeting for US assistance to encourage Romania and Bulgaria to fully support Black Sea Harmony. DASD MacDougall countered that the Black Sea is an important security area. The US acknowledges and supports Turkey's leadership role in the Black Sea. However, he underscored, the US does not accept Russia's desire to keep the Black Sea, Central Asia or the Caucasus "closed" to outside participation.

Other Issues

¶10. (C) Other issues to come up during Gen Wald's discussions included:

-- PKK: While none of the Turkish generals raised the PKK with Gen Wald, he found opportunities to remind them about US assistance against the terrorist group -- in Europe and with robust intelligence sharing. In response, Ozkok noted that

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we cannot let one issue define the relationship, but the Turkish public believe there should not be discrimination among terrorist groups. That is why TGS urges the USG to make more high-level statements condemning the PKK, take some action that can be shown to the public, and apply political pressure on Iraqis on this issue. Wald agreed that terrorist groups are interrelated and should be opposed, citing examples from north Africa.

-- Iraq: Kosaner noted Iraq was a critical issue. Gen Wald responded that Iraq will require patience, just like Bosnia, but the problems were well understood and therefore could be addressed. At the roundtable, TGS laid out all of its concerns in Iraq, from the territorial integrity of the country and the status of Kirkuk to the control of natural resources and the elimination of the PKK. On the PKK, the Turkish side said the US has an important responsibility to eliminate the PKK presence in northern Iraq, suggesting that "political demands are prevailing over legal ones" and emphasizing that there should be no discrimination among terrorists. TGS also suggested that PKK financial supporters should be categorized as criminal terrorists.

-- Syria: According to Kosaner Syria is more difficult than Iraq because it is more opaque. During the roundtable, TGS defended its engagement with Syria and praised Syria's withdrawal of forces from Lebanon, as well as its "unconditional consent" for the UN to interrogate five suspects.

-- Anti-Americanism within the ranks: Kosaner denied that anti-Americanism was widespread within the Turkish military, saying there may be "some individuals" with this view but that was not prevalent. Gen Wald observed that younger officers needed to be "properly" influenced. (Comment: In response to our request that Gen Wald be given an opportunity

to address younger Turkish officers, TGS summoned its senior staff -- at least 24 generals with a larger number of field-grade officers. While this wasn't what we had in mind, it was a start to getting more Turkish officers direct exposure to senior American military leaders. End comment.)

-- NATO critical infrastructure conference: Gen Wald pointed to the recent stand-off between Ukraine and Russia over gas to underscore the importance of the February NATO critical infrastructure conference in Prague. Ozkok agreed, adding that Turkey should diversify its sources of supply.

-- Balkans: Gen Wald said the international community needed to consider the Balkans as a whole. He urged Turkey, which remains active in the region, to identify possible initiatives to help cement democracy there.

-- Caspian Guard: Touting the Caspian Guard as a counter-proliferation, counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, resource- security initiative for Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, Gen Wald urged that both NATO and Turkey take an interest in the program.

WILSON